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PHILADELPHIA:  
JNO. PENINGTON & SON.  
1871.





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## BROAD STREET, PENN SQUARE, AND THE PARK.

THE National Capital has been called a city of magnificent distances, but it has no avenue which compares, in length, with the great wide street, which, beginning at the Delaware, where that river receives the waters of the Schuylkill, and running northward, again reaches that same noble stream, thirty-three miles, it is said, from the spot where it begins. This is a truly magnificent distance. And if it be a fact that

“Distance lends enchantment to the view,”

strangers who visit our city cannot fail to be charmed with the sight of our principal street. Unfortunately our efforts to adorn it have not been commensurate with its length. An Opera House, a Masonic Hall, two or three stone churches with vainly aspiring pinnacles, and the palace of the Union League, with the stars and stripes proudly waving from the top of a gigantic pole, stand like oases in a desert of inferior buildings. Vacant lots, the remains of departed coal yards, and the ashes of burned warehouses, contrast strangely with founderies and machine shops, the din of which testifies to the life and industry of our citizens. Evidently Philadelphia is *not* a finished city.

For some years past the intersection of this avenue with Market Street has been the chief point of interest. What shall be done with so large a piece of unoccupied ground? While some of our citizens have generously desired to “*donate*” corner lots to the various learned

societies intrusted with the art, science, and literature of the city, others equally disinterested, have insisted upon using the centre of the square for new municipal buildings.

No person having any claim to good taste should think for a moment of crowding the point where two great streets cross each other. There, if anywhere, should be free space and open sky. The hint given by Penn in laying out the original city has been entirely neglected in the plans for its extension. No other open space marks the intersection of the principal avenues, or breaks the uniformity of the long, straight streets. To cover with buildings the only one that we have would be an act of sheer barbarism.

In the pictures of great masters there are parts of especial interest, and parts which are subordinate. So, also, in the works of great writers, in the plays of Shakspeare, and in the novels and poems of Walter Scott; and the orator, who does not occasionally rise to flights of higher eloquence, has no influence on his audience. Without contrast there is no effect. This is unquestionably one of the first canons of art. Neither the painter, nor the poet, nor the orator who neglects it can ever rise above the dead level of mediocrity. Nor can a great city ever be a delight to the strangers who visit it, or to the people who reside in it, if those to whom its improvements and embellishments are entrusted disregard this same law. It is not enough that a street should be wide and long. It must have points of greater interest, marked by a higher beauty. Especially, where it is met or crossed by other streets of unusual width, should increased spaciousness be given, and objects of more than common elegance should arrest attention. The rectangular plan, which has been so rigidly adhered to in laying out Philadelphia, has given it a monotony that is detestable to foreigners, accustomed to see such matters directed by judgment and

taste. Even the oblique roads, by which the old city was formerly entered, have evidently been looked upon as interferences with its symmetry and as blemishes on its beauty, to be hidden or made as little obtrusive as possible, while a people with higher ideas of art would have converted them into wide avenues, conducive both to the elegance and to the convenience of the city.

Every year, many of our citizens visit Paris, to return filled with admiration of that splendid capital. And to that splendor nothing contributes more than the magnificent avenues which run in all directions and connect the different quarters of the city. That great metropolis, originally built at hap-hazard, without any plan, a complicated and confused network of narrow, tortuous, and obstructed streets, has been rendered not only the most elegant but the most convenient city in the world, a triumph of engineering and of art. It is now easy to pass from one part of the city to another in a nearly straight line. The wide avenues are planted with trees, and where they intersect with each other, are opened into "places," great square or circular spaces embellished with columns, fountains, and statues. These are nearly as well fitted for recreation, and are as attractive resorts as the parks, and, as every inhabitant can reach one of them by a few minutes' walk, they can be daily used by that part of the population who can spare time only on Sundays and holidays to visit the more distant parks in the environs of the city. Of these avenues and "places," the finest are those which connect the palace of the Tuileries, in the heart of the city, with the Bois de Boulogne outside of the fortifications. This park is not to be compared with our own, either for extent or for the natural beauty of its scenery, but the manner in which it is united with the Tuileries is an admirable illustration of how much may be done to adorn a great city when public improvements are guided by skill and taste, and furnishes

an example which should be carefully studied in arranging the approaches to our own park.

Adjoining the palace of the Tuileries is the garden, laid out in the reign of Louis XIV. in geometrical style by the celebrated landscape gardener Le Nôtre, and adorned with statues and fountains. This garden covers more than fifty acres of ground in the very centre of Paris. Beyond it is the Place de la Concorde, an immense open square, in the centre of which stands the obelisk of Luxor, a single block of red granite, seventy-four feet high, brought from Egypt, and erected in the year 1836. On the right and left are fountains, shedding daily a million and a half gallons of water into basins fifty feet in diameter. From the Place de la Concorde a wide avenue, bordered with trees, leads straight to the bridge of Neuilly, nearly four miles distant from the Tuileries. It passes through the Champs Elysées, or Elysian Fields, the great central park of Paris. Beyond the Champs Elysées, this avenue again widens into a "Rond-point," or circular space, where several streets meet, and farther on is the Place de l'Étoile, in the centre of which stands the great Arc de Triomphe, spanning the avenue with an arch fifty feet wide and one hundred feet high in the clear. This splendid monument, the largest triumphal arch in the world, was designed by the architect, Chalgrin, and begun by Napoleon in the year 1806, but was not finished until the year 1836, in the reign of Louis Philippe, under the supervision of Huyot. Standing on one of the highest spots in Paris, it is visible at a great distance, and is one of the most striking objects in approaching the city. From this point twelve wide streets diverge in different directions. One, styled Avenue de l'Impératrice, leads directly to the Bois de Boulogne. This superb avenue is nearly a mile long and more than three hundred feet (100 metres) wide, divided into central and side streets, separated by trees and grass.



We have no Louis Napoleon nor Baron Haussmann to tear down houses and open streets and squares, in order to remedy defects in the plan of our city, but a tasteful management of avenues already made may do something to relieve the monotony of it. We cannot expect to rival at once the magnificence of a capital on which a nation has lavished its wealth for hundreds of years, but we may show that we appreciate the art that has adorned it. Already we have great avenues leading to the north and to the west, and to the Elysian Fields beyond Fairmount. Are they forever to be mere highways for the exclusive use of mule teams and freight cars? Or are they to be planted with trees, and made as attractive as those of Paris? Already, where Broad and Market streets cross each other, we have a Place de la Concorde. Shall we agree to block it up with buildings and so destroy it, or shall we agree to embellish and adorn it?

The advantages of these open "places," in an art as well as in a sanitary point of view, are now recognized in every civilized city. Not only in Paris and other European capitals; in our sister city of New York, Union Place has been reserved at the head of Broadway where it unites the Fourth Avenue, Fourteenth Street, and University Place. While other cities are buying property in order to make these open squares, is Philadelphia now, in the 19th century, to close up her principal avenues and build upon the great central place, that has been reserved for nearly two hundred years? Has her public school system done so little for the cultivation of her inhabitants that they are without any appreciation of the beautiful? Are those to whom she intrusts her public improvements in benighted ignorance of the first principles of metropolitan æsthetics?

If then all pride in the city be not at an end, let every voice be raised to condemn the vandalism of shutting up

our principal avenues, and to forbid any encroachment on our Central Square.

For more than half a century, Philadelphia has dreamed of the future magnificence of the two great avenues which cross in the heart of the city, but now at the very moment when the realization of the dream seems possible, a project is seriously entertained to barricade both streets and to destroy their beauty forever. With taste worthy of a country town, which plants its court-house right in the middle of the village green, this great metropolis and maritime port, as it delights to be called, proposes to move its court-house from the business part of the city, and plant it in the centre of the village green; to shut up completely and forever the vista of the two widest streets, and to terminate the splendor of the dream with a hideous reality.

While every effort is being made to persuade the General Government that Philadelphia is the proper locality for its chief Naval Station, the advocates of the project for taking the courts to Penn Square endeavor to make it appear that the city is *moving* inland, and that business is leaving the Delaware front. Not so. The city is merely extending, as all cities must do, in trebling their population. Nor is the business of the city *moving*. It, too, is but extending, and in the only way that it can extend, by converting dwellings into offices and stores, or by tearing down and rebuilding. The business is now just where it was fifty years ago. The North America, the Philadelphia, the Farmers' and Mechanics', and other banks are still in the same blocks; while more recently chartered institutions, such as the Fidelity, the First National, the Tradesmen's, and Corn Exchange Banks have located their offices to the eastward and not to the west. The Pennsylvania Railroad, although its terminus is in West Philadelphia, finds it more convenient to transact its financial business on the eastern side of the



city, and the Reading and other railroads have their offices in the same neighborhood. The United States Treasurer had to be removed from the Mint to the Custom House, so great was the inconvenience of having his office at a point so remote from the business centre of the city.

What the *movers* of Philadelphia have accomplished may be seen at Dock and Second Streets. One of the most elegant marble structures in the country has been *moved* to a down-east town to make room for a brick barrack of truly marvellous ugliness.

But while all new buildings for business purposes have been erected within a short distance of the Delaware River, those put up for ornament and recreation have sought a home on Broad Street. The Academy of Music is there, the Horticultural Hall is there, the Union League is there, the new Masonic Hall is there, the Academy of the Fine Arts will be there; while coal yards, railroads, and freight depots are taking their departure.

When private individuals and the directors of corporations, in the management of their own affairs, thus clearly show a unanimity of opinion as to which quarter of the city is the proper locality for work, and which for rest and enjoyment, there can be no doubt that it is a mistake for the municipality to put its offices at a distance from all other business. The experience of London proves it. The Government of England is at this moment erecting new buildings for that city. Courts, that for centuries have sat at Westminster near to the parks and to the kings, are now, for the convenience of the people, to be removed to the business part of the city. And, while Paris has been almost rebuilt within the last twenty-five years, the Palais de Justice still stands on the same spot where it stood nine hundred years ago.

Centre Square is now entirely open; the railings have been removed and the trees cut down. Every one, there-

fore, has now an opportunity to see for himself how much the beauty of wide streets is increased by an open space at their intersection. The great Hall of the Masons is now for the first time to be seen to full advantage, and it is easy to imagine what kind of buildings private enterprise will soon substitute for the others which now surround the square if it be kept open. It must soon become one of the most elegant spots in the world.

If we desire to make of our city a great metropolis, to be visited and admired by strangers, a pride and a joy to ourselves, railroads and coal-cars must not always occupy the middle and both ends of the town. If we expect the General Government to remove the navy yard to League Island, we should remove our factories and founderies, our mills and machine-shops, to the same neighborhood, where their dirt and smoke can pollute neither the water that we drink nor the air that we breathe.

If the great park, with which we have undertaken to adorn the city, is to be a place of general resort and to benefit *all* of our citizens, it must be brought within reach of all. It must be connected with Broad Street and with the centre of the city by as short a route as possible; and the avenues which lead to it must be made elegant and attractive; in short, must be made part of the park.

“Many persons,” says the eloquent President of the Park Commission, “whose journeyings brought them to Philadelphia, came and went with no better notion of its topography than that it is built in the centre of a plain, having no greater irregularity of surface than an occasional mound of cobble-stones, and no rural surroundings besides scattered ranges of cattle-pens and lengthened stretches of cabbage-gardens. The extension of the Park has dispelled such allusions. For all who choose to pass its portals there are walks and drives, miles after miles in extent, which, leading through scenes of unsurpassed loveliness, conduct to the fairest and brightest prospects.”

Yes, for all who *choose* to pass its portals; but while its portals are obstructed by railroads and coal-cars, and are only to be reached by a long and tedious drive through dirty, narrow streets, 'mid founderies and factories, strangers have little inducement offered them to visit the spot which is to dispel their illusions. While the most convenient way to reach our Garden of Eden is to take the train for Reading, Pittsburg, or New York, they are not likely to prolong their stay in our city, but will come and go with no other notions of its inhabitants than that they are a people without cultivation or taste, a hive swarmed solely for the purpose of spinning cotton and forging iron. And if police offices and criminal courts are to become the central ornaments of the city, they may be expected to conclude that our chief pride is, that it is not without the vices of a metropolis.

It will be seen, by looking at a map of the city, that if a straight line be drawn from the north side of Penn Square to a point a few yards to the eastward of the end of the Girard Avenue Bridge, about one-half of this line lies in the track of the Pennsylvania Avenue or Willow Street branch of the Reading Railroad. Broad, Green, and Spring Garden Streets are all crossed *at grade* by this road, and as it forms the eastern boundary of the Park, from the waterworks to Thompson Street, the gateways that give access to the south end, on the left bank of the Schuylkill, have this nuisance right in front of them. It is thus not only a source of danger to vehicles and pedestrians, but it is a serious obstruction to the formation of a fine entrance to the Park at the point nearest to the centre of the city. And as that is the part of the Park which must ever be most used by pedestrians and children, its entrance should be entirely free from the dangers incident to railroads on which steam is used.

The removal of the rails from Broad Street to the Columbia Bridge furnishes not only the shortest and most

direct route from our future Place de la Concorde to the Park, but it converts the track into a wide avenue on its boundary, and forms a drive in nearly a straight line through the East Park to Belmont, on the west side of the Schuylkill, crossing that river at the Columbia Bridge, and thus "relieving the Girard Avenue Bridge from a portion of the travel by which it is sometimes inconveniently crowded."

No doubt we shall be told that this branch of the Reading Railroad is required by the large manufacturing establishments located in its neighborhood. In reply to this we ask, will such establishments remain in this locality forever? Their removal is merely a question of *time*, a question that may be safely left to the decision of the owners of the property. With Penn Square open, and Broad Street lined with fine buildings, all property between the Square and Park will be so much increased in value, that manufacturers will find that it is their interest to remove to the suburbs. For the present, Callowhill Street, by widening it and Twenty-fifth Street, may be made to give almost a direct connection both with the east and west sides of the Park. Eventually, both it and Pennsylvania Avenue must become two of the most important streets of the city.

Trees on Broad Street and on the other avenues leading to the Park, should be planted, not according to the caprice of individuals, but at regular intervals, and under the superintendence of the Park Commissioners. Fine forest trees are not to be grown within ten or a dozen feet of each other, or very near to high buildings, but must have room to spread their branches, if they are ever to be ornaments to an avenue. Above all must they be protected, with sedulous care, from the hands of that class of empirical arboriculturists who annually infest our streets, armed with saws, with which they amputate the limbs of noble



trees, leaving nought but headless trunks to cumber the sidewalks. In vain these trunks

Put forth

The tender leaves of hope;

they never again can become trees. "The grand and graceful arboreous avenues which the careful nurture of centuries has secured to European capitals," were not made by any such system of pruning.

In these routes to the Park, four places suggest themselves as points that should be marked by monuments, or more than ordinarily ornamental features. The first and most important point is the intersection of Broad and Market Streets. Penn Square should be thrown open to the streets. In the centre of the Place should be erected a bronze statue of Washington, for which the Cincinnati Society already have nearly enough funds, or some other monument, large enough to be seen at some distance, but not so large as to interfere with the vista of the streets. With fountains of elegant design in the corners, to cool the air in summer, statues, and abundance of handsome lamps to light it at night, this spot might be made, at small expense, as elegant and as attractive as the Place de la Concorde at Paris. "The importance of large open spaces in great cities," says Mr. McMichael, in the report before quoted, "as means of health and enjoyment to the inhabitants, is too obvious to need comment. Their value, as sources of attraction to strangers, is equally apparent." Here, then, we have a large open space, *right in the centre* of the city, waiting to be made "a source of attraction to strangers." It may, very properly, be adorned with fine buildings, but they should be erected *around* it, and not in it.

The next point of interest is Broad Street, where it is met by Pennsylvania Avenue and Callowhill Street, between which some monument or fountain should be

placed ; widening Broad Street on the western side to obtain space for it, and rounding the corners of the block into the two streets leading respectively to the east and west sides of the Park.

Again, where Pennsylvania Avenue crosses Twenty-first Street, there should be a "Rond-Point" or circular space, from which the streets should diverge in straight lines, instead of following the curvature of the railroad.

The high ground, near to the east end of the Girard Avenue Bridge, is another spot that should be marked by some tall column, or other ornamental feature, open to and visible from the three avenues which meet near this point. Supposing steam to be the power used when no water is going over the dam, a fountain on the largest scale could here be maintained at the cost of pumping only. There would be no waste, as all the water used for the fountain would run back into the pool.

Located as our Park is, in the neighborhood of, rather than *in* the city, its principal use now is to preserve the purity of the Schuylkill water, and to furnish an agreeable afternoon drive. To be a benefit to all, as a place for frequent recreation, it must, we repeat, be brought within the reach of all. It is to be hoped, therefore, that all will see the necessity of uniting it with Penn Square by the shortest possible route, and of making Broad Street, and the other avenues leading to it, in reality part of it. Broad Street should be planted from end to end, and the whole of it made a park, daily accessible to those who live in closely built streets and densely crowded houses, but whose distance from Fairmount prevents them from visiting it, except on holidays.

To know what you have to do, and to do it, says Mr. Ruskin, is the great principle of success in every department of human effort, failure being more often attributable to a confused understanding of the thing to be done

than to an inability to do it. In the adornment of our city, then, let us bear in mind the necessity of a clear understanding of the thing to be done, in order that we may avoid doing anything that may hereafter have to be undone. The improvement of the approaches to the Park should be confided to a permanent commission, for it is only in such a body that a knowledge of the thing to be done can be coupled with an ability to do it. Such a board we already have in the Park Commissioners, and to them should be intrusted the improvement of the streets above mentioned. Especially Penn Square and Broad Street, at least from Washington Street to Girard Avenue, should be put under their control, to be planted with trees at regular intervals, so that we may eventually, at some future day, have the arboreous avenues similar to those which, as Mr. McMichael tells us, ornament so many of the European capitals.

Having endeavored to show the advantage of keeping Penn Square open, and the possibility of making it the rival of one of the most celebrated squares of Europe, we will conclude with a suggestion for a central embellishment.

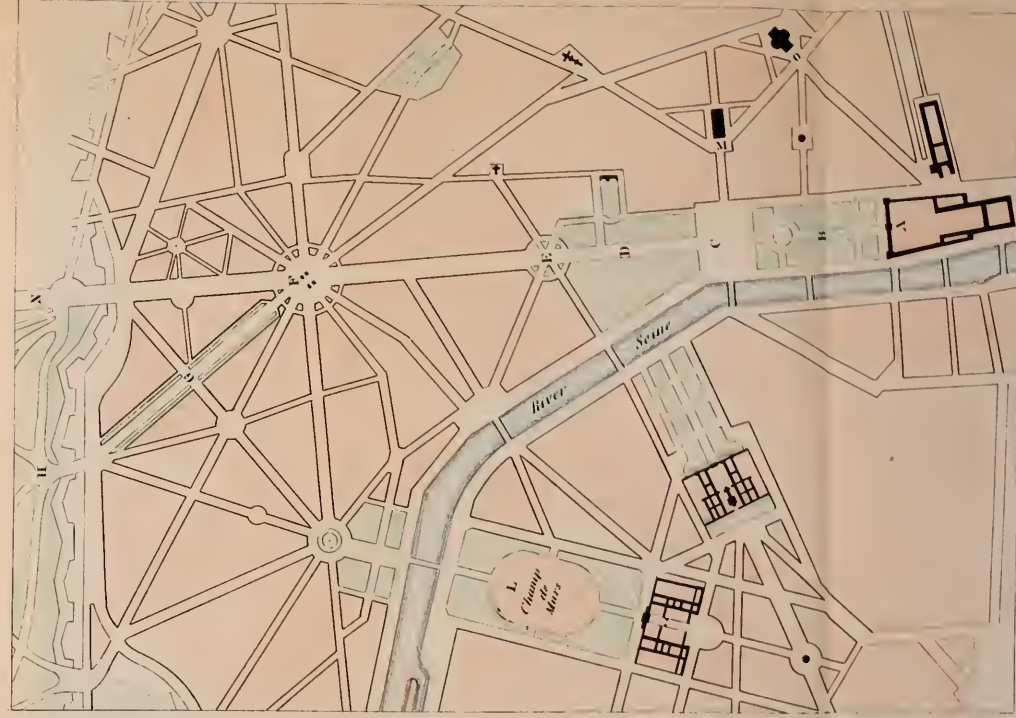
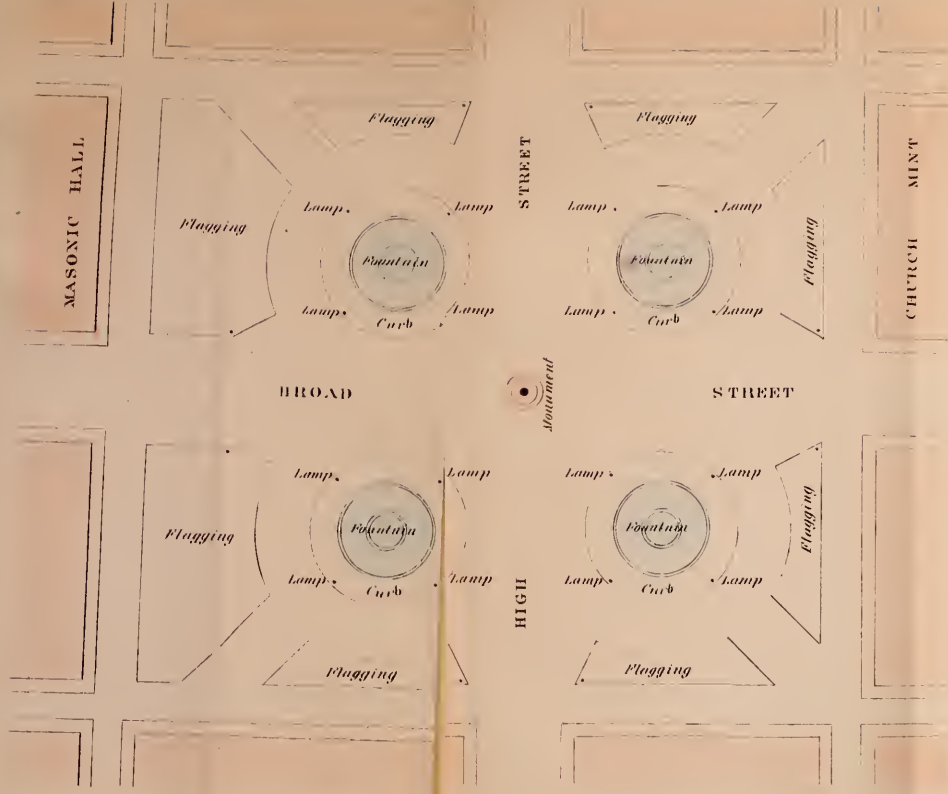
The centennial anniversary of the most important event in the history of America is now approaching, an event of which Philadelphia was the scene, and which Philadelphia should commemorate by a monument of bronze. What more fitting ornament for the centre of the great square in the heart of the city? What more propitious moment for its inauguration than the Fourth of July, 1876? Such a monument should be not only commemorative of our history, but illustrative of the present state of our art and of our industry. Its erection, then, must not be intrusted to men who proclaim that there is, in our city, no ability to erect anything but steam-engines. If architects and sculptors be not

already driven from among us, to find more liberal patrons and more congenial homes, let not its design be sought in Italy, that graveyard of art; nor, while claiming a pre-eminence of skill for our founders and metal-workers, should we go to Bavaria for a casting to be erected in their midst.









- Avenues of Paris*
- A. Palace of the Tuilleries.
  - B. The Garden.
  - C. Place de la Concorde.
  - D. Champs Elysees.
  - E. Grand Point.
  - F. Place de l'Etoile.
  - G. Avenue de l'Imperatrice.
  - H. Bois de Boulogne.
  - I. Avenue de Neuilly.
  - L. Champs Elysees.
  - M. Church of La Madeleine.
  - N. New Opera House.



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